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## **FATHERHOOD PROGRAM**

### **A Program available through the Division of Child Support Services (DCSS)**

The Fatherhood Program was created by the Georgia Department of Human Services' (DHS) Division of Child Support Services (DCSS) in 1997 and was statewide in 1998. The Fatherhood Program (FHP) provides assistance to non-custodial parents (NCPs) who are unemployed or underemployed and are unable to pay their full child support obligation. FHP assists non-custodial parents with locating resources leading to career employment paying above minimum wage, increased self-sufficiency, and increased emotional, parental and financial involvement in the lives of their children. For information about the Georgia Fatherhood Services Program and other Community Outreach Services, call 1-844-mygadhs (1-844-694-2347).

Georgia's Fatherhood Program is the largest state-operated fatherhood program in the country. Over 5,000 non-custodial parents received services through the program during FFY2012 and their families received nearly \$10 million in child support during that same time period.

Georgia recognized early on that many non-custodial parents wanted to pay their court-ordered child support, but lacked the economic capacity to do so. DCSS has partnered with other government and community agencies to develop a comprehensive network of services for this group.

#### **THE FATHERHOOD PROGRAM:**

- Generally takes three to six months to complete.
- Serves both fathers and mothers who are non-custodial parents.
- Participants are required to report progress toward improving their education, employment, and overcoming barriers.
- Participants are required to pay child support during this time.
- By completing the program, participants improve their chance of obtaining full-time employment, and earning a wage that they can live on and pay their child support.

#### **BARRIERS FACING MANY PARTICIPANTS INCLUDE:**

- Lack of a high school diploma
- Criminal record
- No transportation
- No driver's license
- Alcohol and substance abuse problems
- Mental health issues

#### **LOOKING TO THE FUTURE AND OVERCOMING THE BARRIERS:**

DCSS realizes that addressing these barriers is critical to expanding the success of the program to more low-income fathers. DCSS works with many community-based groups, non-profit organizations and educational institutions to address the many barriers facing fathers and families. Communities across the state already have services in place that can help fathers and families right where they live. Participants in the program receive continual coaching and mentoring from Fatherhood staff as well as former participants.